

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Ascension Technology Corp.

Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center

Ascension Technology Moves Toward High Performance

Client Profile:

Ascension Technology Corporation is a manufacturer of motion tracking systems located in Burlington, Vermont. A one-man company when it was first established in 1986, it has since grown to include a team of 40 employees.

Situation:

Ascension Technology Corp (ATC) has had difficulty achieving its growth plans in the last few years as it focused on developing its manufacturing capabilities. Excessive inventory levels and increasing demand on manufacturing systems, including multiple products and configurations, began to have a negative impact on both the company's financial health and accuracy of lead times quoted to customers. By December 2001, the company needed outside assistance. It contacted the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

Solution:

When VMEC met with ATC management, the company indicated its desire to become a high-performance company. This goal required a corporate transformation, involving manufacturing, research and development, and administration. VMEC drafted a comprehensive plan and began the company's journey toward transformation with several lean manufacturing training and implementation initiatives. These included a value stream map of the manufacturing floor, lean training, 5S training and implementation, cell design and implementation, and setup reduction activities. During the implementation process, ATC personnel redesigned their own work areas into cell configurations, constructed new inventory control and replenishment systems, and addressed significant quality issues.

Led by VMEC, ATC improved its lead times and reduced its inventory, implemented a product development software package, and reduced waste in the order process. More importantly, the company has transformed its philosophy to allow customer demand to drive manufacturing output.

Results:

Improved lead times from 2 to 6 weeks to 3 days.

Hit target takt time of approximately 20 percent.

Reduced inventory by 10 percent; anticipating a 50 percent reduction within six

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months.

Using the ATOM-SME process for product development.

Re-engineered front office systems to reduce waste.

Testimonial:

"We knew at the start of this project that we had to do something to streamline our manufacturing processes. What we did not realize at that point was [sic] the ramifications would extend into the rest of the company. With their holistic transformation approach, the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center has enabled us not just to begin the process of eliminating waste throughout the organization but also to look at the business as a series of interconnected value streams developing along a corporate lifecycle. That realization will allow us to grow the business beyond our previous goals."

Jay Monahan, Chief Operations Officer